

Veterinary Client Mediation Service

How We Can Help



Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS) is an independent and free service for clients (animal owners) and veterinary professionals. The service is funded by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) who regulate veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.

All veterinary practices should have their own internal complaints procedure to deal with any complaints raised by clients. Most concerns are normally resolved informally. When a complaint cannot be resolved, the VCMS offers an impartial service to assist both parties to reach a solution they are both happy with. We understand that it is important that this is done fairly and quickly. We are respectful of equality and diversity - anyone who makes a complaint and anyone against whom a complaint is made will be treated fairly, whatever their background or circumstances.

VCMS Mediation Process

The mediation process attempts to resolve problems without taking sides, making judgments or giving legal advice. The VCMS will provide mediation, ensure good communication and help the parties reach an agreement. We will listen to your complaint and then gather information to establish what happened. We will then work with both you and the veterinary practice involved to help reach a fair resolution. By exploring why you are dissatisfied, and listening to both sides, we will support everyone involved to work towards a solution.

The process is:

- Confidential
- Impartial
- Resolution focused

VCMS aims to settle complaints about vets and their practice efficiently and quickly. We will offer solutions rather than impose decisions. We work with clients and veterinary practices to reach a solution that both sides can accept, whether that is an apology, remedial treatment, a refund or referral to another professional. We cannot award or recommend compensation.

Contact VCMS on:
0345 040 5834

Open from 8am - 6pm
Monday to Friday

Visit our website:
www.vetmediation.co.uk

Service provided by
Nockolds Solicitors





The VCMS process is confidential. It is intended to provide an informal way to explore resolution and find a way to resolve the complaint and issues raised. Neither party is permitted to use the content of the mediation or any letters, emails or documents in any subsequent court proceedings. The VCMS will not keep records of the proposals and discussions that have taken place during mediation once the mediation has concluded. The VCMS will also not keep any other paper or electronic document received including records, invoices, emails, letters and call summaries. The only document which will be kept is any final signed agreement/outcome as well as basic data information. The mediators and resolution managers are impartial and will not provide any evidence, whether written or otherwise, of the proposals and discussions in mediation, this includes not being required to attend court to give evidence.

The VCMS process is intended to be informal and you do not need legal representation. You can appoint a family member or friend to be your representative if you would prefer to do so.

Who Can Complain To Us?

Anyone can refer a complaint to VCMS if it relates to a veterinary practice.

What Complaints Can We Help With?

We can help resolve complaints about the service you have received or care provided to your animals. The VCMS is able to mediate complaints and concerns raised by individual animal owners regarding Veterinary professionals and their practice.

When Can a Complaint Be Made?

The first step is to contact the practice and tell them you are unhappy as soon as possible.

Every practice should have a formal complaints procedure and a person responsible for dealing with complaints.

You may contact the VCMS at any stage if you wish to speak to someone impartial during this initial complaint process. However, the VCMS asks:

- That practices try to resolve your complaint within 4 weeks of being made (following guidance issued by their representative organisations). If your veterinary practice does not respond within 4 weeks, you can refer your complaint to the VCMS.
- If your veterinary practice's final response to your complaint does not resolve your complaint, then contact the VCMS as soon as possible.

VCMS would recommend that you refer your complaint to the VCMS within 6 months of the date of your vet's final response.

How Can a Complaint Be Made?

If your complaint cannot be resolved with the practice, then you can refer your complaint to VCMS by:

- Telephoning us on **0345 040 5834** Monday - Friday between 8am - 6pm
- Emailing us at enquiries@vetmediation.co.uk
- Completing the complaint form at www.vetmediation.co.uk
- Writing to us at VCMS, 6 Market Square, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3UZ



What Happens Next?

- We will ask you to complete a form to allow the practice to release your veterinary records and any all relevant information
- We will contact the practice and obtain all the information we need to understand what has happened
- We will then contact you and the practice to discuss a solution
- When a solution is found, we will help to implement this
- If the solution proposed is not accepted by either party, your complaint can be referred to a Senior Mediator

A step-by-step explanation of our complaint handling process is set out later in this document. Importantly, we will also ask you how we have done and listen to your feedback to continuously improve the mediation service. Please visit www.vetmediation.co.uk for more details. A copy of the scheme rules is available on request.

Equality and Diversity

VCMS are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity within our policies, practices and procedures, including the delivery of our mediation service. We shall treat everyone equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity or caring responsibility.

Either party can end the mediation process at any time. Participating in mediation does not restrict your right to take further legal action, but we do ask that neither party do so while the mediation process is ongoing.

What Complaints Can't We Help With?

Some complaints involving professionals and practices that are regulated by the RCVS, cannot be mediated by VCMS such as:

- **Serious Professional Misconduct**

If there is any concern that the professionals involved are unfit to practice or behaving inappropriately, VCMS will immediately refer the matter to the RCVS. The RCVS regulates all veterinary professionals in the UK and authorises them to practice. Please visit www.rcvs.org.uk for more information and to raise your concern.

If you are unsure whether your circumstances fall within these areas, please call us for more information.

Further Information

- **RCVS** - www.rcvs.org.uk
- **Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support** - www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-bereavement-support
- **PDSA** - www.pdsa.org.uk
- **British Veterinary Association** - www.bva.co.uk/You-and-your-vet/Advice-for-pet-owners
- **Guidance for Pet Owners** - www.bva.co.uk/You-and-your-vet/BVA-advice-leaflets
- **Kennel Club** - www.thekennelclub.org.uk
- **Council of the Cat Fancy** - www.gccfcats.org